

Federal law requires local broadcasters to serve the public interest in exchange for its free use of a public resource - the "analog" and "digital" frequency spectra.

Sinclair Broadcasting will be violating anti-electioneering law if it airs "Stolen Honor" as "news content" within 60 days of the election, pre-empting network programming and failing to give equal time to a pro-Kerry partisan equivalent.

As a citizen, a technologist, and a student of public policy, I want to register in the strongest possible language my outrage and disgust at the reprehensible and criminal malfeasance that Sinclair's planned action would represent.

Even more important, as a taxpayer and businessperson I want to clearly record my displeasure with this entirely predictable result of relaxing FCC station-ownership rules to accommodate further media consolidation.

I want the Commission to understand that I oppose Sinclair's proposed action, that I oppose all FCC behavior that panders to corporate media interests over the public good (including its shameful refusal to demand the return of "analog" spectra now that "digital" spectra have been distributed), and that I oppose the license renewal of any Sinclair affiliate that proceeds with this blatant attempt to use a public resource to serve private interest.

While the FCC is an appointed body, it is still accountable to the public and to the administration. Commissioners and administrations can both be changed. Should the FCC fail to awaken to its responsibilities, it can expect to reap the consequences.

Sinclair broadcast affiliates are already in a business with declining market share. You'd think they would see that creating distrust and hostility throughout a large portion of its viewing public can only hurt its ratings, drive away advertisers, and foment boycotts.

But if ideology so dominates reason that Sinclair affiliates proceed with this illegal plan, the FCC's duty is clear. Licenses must be pulled.

And the government should then prosecute the parent company under anti-electioneering law. If the Justice department will not bring the case, you can be sure that public-interest advocacy groups will.